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## Secretarial Election discussed at community meetings

By Mike Wilber  
MNN Reporter

Discussion of the upcoming Secretarial Election was held at five Menominee community meetings.

The special election is a vote to amend the Menominee constitution to allow the tribe's

Kenosha casino venture, if approved, to be sued "in any court of competent jurisdiction." Investors in the project would not commit to it unless the tribe expressly granted the limited waiver of sovereign immunity.

A proposed amendment was defeated in January that would have created an off-reservation

"gaming disputes court." A two-day February General Council meeting reached a consensus on a new amendment, which eliminated the special court, and reviewed and approved the management agreement between the tribe and Nii Jii Entertainment.

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## Menominee Casino entertainment is well received by fans



Jo Dee Messina

By Yvonne M. Kaquatosh  
MNN Editor

Within the last two weeks the musical entertainment at the Menominee Nation Casino has been very accommodating – satisfying customers young and old alike.

For country music fans, Jo Dee Messina gave an outstanding performance on Monday April 26th. And, for a more nostalgic atmosphere, the Marvelettes were on center stage in the casino lounge this past Monday, May 3. Unfortunately their associate, Little Eva, was ill and was unable to make the trip. You can read about both outstanding performances in our entertainment section in this issue of Menominee Nation News.

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## Glen Miller Hall grand opening



Photo courtesy CMN

The College of the Menominee Nation officially opened its doors to Glen Miller Hall on Saturday, May 1. Participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony (l-r) Larry Waukau, CMN board chairman; Lorraine Seratti, Wisconsin state representative; Dr. Verna Fowler, CMN president; Apesanahkwat, Menominee tribal chairman; Sherry White, CMN student government president; and Virginia Nuske, CMN board member.

## Tax credit funds housing/home ownership program

By Mike Wilber  
MNN Reporter

Nineteen new homes will be built in Middle Village as a result of a tax credit program created to stimulate home sales in Indian communities.

A Florida investment firm, Raymond James Financial Inc., has created a \$20 million equity fund to finance the housing project, of which two Minnesota tribes are also taking part. The Menominee Tribe will be getting \$1.1 million from the tax credit program over 15 years to help pay the \$1.6 million total cost of the homes. The remaining \$500,000 will be paid from HUD block grants.

John Seignemartin, director of tribal housing, said they currently

have 85 to 90 families waiting for housing. Tentative selections have been made for occupancy of the 19 Wick "panelized" homes, but Seignemartin said families interested in the program should still apply as some of those selected may not fit the income criteria, or simply back out of the program.

Unlike the current HUD program, once a family is selected for a home, their rent won't dramatically increase if their income rises. Selections for occupancy are geared toward low-income families but once you have it, Seignemartin said, the rate is set. They were required to choose two families that fell into the 30 percent of

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If the amendment is approved on May 11, the tribe and Nii Jii hope to have the casino opened by November. The National Indian Gaming Commission must first approve the project. The state, tribe and Nii Jii must come to an agreement over the state's cut of gross income, and the BIA must approve the transfer of land into trust. NIGC reviews the project to ensure the tribe sufficiently benefits from it.

Apesanahkwat, Menominee chairman, speculated at the Neopit meeting that even if only 51 percent of revenue comes to the tribe, NIGC would approve it. According to the management agreement, the tribe would get 65 percent of net revenue, 35 percent to Nii Jii.

The state, however, might ask for more than the standard 7.9 percent corporate tax rate they applied to Indian casinos in compact renegotiations. If that rate is raised for the Kenosha project, Apesanahkwat said the tribe would then negotiate for additional games, such as craps, poker, roulette, or higher maximum bets at the tables. "It's all about marketing," Apesanahkwat said. "What the Menominee get (in regard to marketing) will decide the percentage the state will get."

Community members had some concerns about the potential competition from other Indian casinos. The Potawatomi currently have a casino featuring slot machines and blackjack tables in Milwaukee. The Lac du Flambeau are seeking a Waukesha casino site. The Ho Chunk recently bought the dog track at Lake Geneva.

Bob Wessels of Nii Jii said they are aware of the other tribes' pursuits, but the location of them would not greatly impact the projected Kenosha revenue figures. However, that does create a need to move quickly to establish a casino clientele, he said, in addition to the dog track's regular customers.

The dog track will remain part of the Kenosha project. Wessels said the track brings in about \$30 million a year. Employees of the track would also retain their jobs.

Wessels said in the first year of operation, the casino is projected to make \$40 million, growing to over \$100 million in the following years. Those figures he called 'conservative.' Tribal programs, Apesanahkwat said, would likely get an 'infusion of funds' within the first year of casino operation.

Per capita payments to tribal members are expected to increase considerably if the project proceeds. Many members wanted assurance that the Menominee Tribal Legislature doesn't reduce the per capita payments, which are allocated at 20 percent of the tribe's take, before money is distributed to programs. Legislators said the 20 percent figure was made by resolution. Lisa Waukau, tribal legislator at the Keshena meeting, said putting the per capita number into an ordinance might make it stronger. If the percentage is to be changed in the future, then it would

undergo the ordinance process, which requires readings in open meetings and a public hearing.

Priorities for the remaining 80 percent were generally agreed to be elder care, youth programs, housing, and higher education funds. Apesanahkwat said the Community Development department already has plans drawn up for an elders nursing home, community center with indoor swimming pool, among others. They just require funding.

Community members also said higher education funds for tribal members should not only include tuition and books, but costs of living while attending school to lessen the financial hardships potential graduates had to endure in previous years. Also, community members pointed out that most Menominees now do not benefit from the tribe's business ventures and wanted assurance that all benefit from the Kenosha project.

## HOMES:

average annual income range, and two from the 40 percent range. Rent for the new three-bedroom, two-bath houses will be between \$195 to \$230 a month.

After 15 years, a family has the option to buy, utilizing one of three options to finance a home on reservation trust land. The recently tribally-chartered Wolf River Development Corporation is expected to have a loan guarantee program in place by June. Seignemartin said to skirt the issue of banks unwilling to finance homes on trust property, the housing department could be cosigners on the loan, families could utilize HUD Section 184 home loan guarantee program, or Rural Development Section 502 guaranteed loan program.

Groundbreaking for a model Wick home took place on April 26 at the former Lillian Plass residence in Keshena. The model home will also serve as sales office for the Wick dealership, although they will limit their sales to Menominee County residences. As the housing department gains experience in the business, they could expand their market area to include off-reservation sales.

The business also provides the opportunity to use local contractors in the construction of the homes. The Wick panelized house itself is built in the Wick factory and comes on two semi-trucks. Menominee contractors can bid on excavation, foundation, dry walling, electrical, or landscaping jobs.

The tax credit is an IRS project that awards investors \$1 in credit for every 77 cents contributed, essentially a 23 percent discount on their tax bill, making it very appealing. Investors expect to make 7 percent to 7.5 percent a year after taxes.